

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 06552 101326Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----072520 101328Z /11

O R 101056Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9295
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

S E C R E T TEHRAN 6552

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FROM UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM

EO 11652: XGDS
TAGS: PFOR, IR, AF
SUBJ: THE SHAH'S VIEWS OF AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY: SHAH BELIEVES AFGHANISTAN NOW FIRMLY UNDER SOVIET CONTROL. COUP CAME FIVE YEARS EARLY, BEFORE IRAN'S EASTERN BASES WERE READY. HE EXPECTS SOVIETS TO MOVE SLOWLY, BUT ANTICIPATES EVENTUAL AFGHAN STIMULATION OF THE BALUCHISTAN AND PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUES. SARDAR ABDUL WALI, FORMER KING ZAHIR SHAH'S SON-IN-LAW, WILL BE VISITING IRAN SOON. SHAH PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW PRECISELY WHAT WALI WANTED, BUT THOUGHT PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR HIM TO BE BASED SOMEWHERE ELSE, PERHAPS SAUDI-ARABIA. SHAH REALIZED POSSIBILITIES OF DIRECT COUNTER-ACTION VIS-A-VIS NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT ARE VERY LIMITED. END

1. DURING MY AUDIENCE WITH THE SHAH ON JULY 9, HE SAID, AS HE HAS BEFORE, THAT THE COUP, ALTHOUGH ANTICIPATED, HAD COME BEFORE EXPECTED. THE KGB HAND WAS CLEAR, BECAUSE WHENEVER BEFORE HAS THE MILITARY IMMEDIATELY HANDED OVER POWER TO THE CIVILIANS? IN THIS INSTANCE HE THOUGHT,

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OUTSIDERS HAD SO DIRECTED. AFGHANISTAN IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOVIETS, HE CONCLUDED.

2. HE EXPECTED THE SOVIETS TO MOVE SLOWLEY; THEY WILL WANT THE CURRENT REGIME TO BE FIRMLY IN POWER BEFORE TAKING FURTHER MOVES. FIRST, WILL COME LAND REFORM ("WHO CAN OPPOSE LAND REFORM-I MYSELF HAVE DONE IT"), BUT THE LAND

REFORM WILL UNDERMINE THE POWER OF THE TRADITIONAL TRIBAL LEADERS AND OTHERS. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WILL BE NEXT AND, IN FACT, ARE BEING DEALT WITH HARSHLY NOW.

3. AFTER THE REGIME IS WELL ESTABLISHED, IT WILL TURN TO THE BALUCHISTAN AND PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUES. ALSO, IMPLICITY REFERRING TO THE HELMAND WATERS AGREEMENT, "WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THE BBC REPORT ON THE NON-RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS WAS ACCURATE".

4. THE AFGHANS SAY THEY WANT AID FROM ALL SOURCES, HE SAID, BUT THAT IT IS NATURAL FOR THE SOVIETS TO SUPPORT THIS POSITION. ANY THIRD COUNTRY AID REDUCES THE BURDEN ON THE SOVIETS. HOWEVER, FOR THE PRESENT, THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO WAIT AND SEE, HE SAID, (AT THE SAME TIME LEAVING NO DOUBT BY HIS GESTURES THAT HE WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC).

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, HE ADMITTED TO NOT HAVING A CLEAR IDEA NOR MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXTENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE OPPOSITION TO TARAKI. THE EXILE OF THE PARCHAMISTS STILL LEFT AFGHANISAN IN THE HANDS OF THE SOVIETS WHO WILL BE PATIENT. HE THEN SAID THAT SARDAR ABDUL WALI, THE SON-IN-LAW OF FORMER KING ZAHIR SHAH, WILL BE VISITING IRAN SOON. THE SHAH SAID THAT HE SAW NO REASON TO DENY THE VISIT WHICH WILL BE HANDLED WITH DISCRETION. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT PRECISELY ABDUL WALI
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WANTED BUT PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR HIM TO SET UP HIS BASE OF OPERATIONS, IF THAT IS WHAT HE WANTED, IN SAUDI ARABIA-ALSO A GOOD MUSLIM COUNTRY.

6. COMMENT: THERE WAS LITTLE THAT WAS NEW IN THIS PART OF OUR CONVERSATION (EXCEPT THE VISIT OF ABDUL WALI) BUT THE SHAH EMPHASIZED THAT AFGHANISTAN, IN HIS VIEW, IS GONE. AS A PRAGMATIST, HE REALIZED THAT POSSIBILITIES OF DIRECT COUNTERACTION ARE VERY LIMITED AND IS LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEXT PROBLEM (PAKISTAN). ALTHOUGH HE HAS SLIGHT "I TOLD YOU SO" APPROACH, HE WAS NOT CRITICAL ABOUT US POLICY. AT A LATER POINT HE REFERRED BACK TO AFGHANISTAN AND SAID THAT HIS DEFENSE PLANS WERE FIVE YEARS BEHIND SCHEDULE: THE COUP CAME EARLY AND IRAN'S EASTERN BASES WERE NOT COMPLETED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, FORM OF GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN06552
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DC ADJUSTED PER TEHRAN 7160
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780282-0006
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780777/aaaacnfj.tel
Line Count: 110
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ea5e6078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2060615
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE SHAH'S VIEWS OF AFGHANISTAN SUMMARY: SHAH BELIEVES AFGHANISTAN NOW FIRMLY UNDER SOVIET CONTROL. COUP CAME FIVE YEARS EARLY, BEFORE IRAN'
TAGS: PINR, PGOV, PEPR, PFOR, IR, AF, UR
To: STATE KABUL
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ea5e6078-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014